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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 002095

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/PCC, WHA/EPSC, INL;
NSC FOR SHANNON AND MADISON; LABOR FOR ILAB;
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD; TREASURY FOR OASIA-LCARTER
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION
USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS # 22: INVESTIGATING HIPOLITO MEJIA

1. (SBU) This is #22 in our current series on politics in the Dominican Republic:

Investigating Hipolito Mejia

Politically motivated Santo Domingo District Attorney Juan Hernandez Peguero would like for the public to expect Hipolito Mejia to go to jail. Hernandez told the press on Monday, April 11, that yes, he was looking into the connections between narcotics trafficker Quirino Paulino and senior members of the Mejia administration, particularly in connection with the irregular appointment of Paulino as a military officer and the subsequent promotion of Quirino to the rank of captain. The papers carry Mejia's signature. Miguel Soto Jimenez, head of the military at the time, told investigators that he had advised Mejia against signing the decree, without effect. We learned on April 13, that the DA Hernandez had issued a subpoena for Mejia to appear in court on April 19 to testify in connection with any and all matters related to the Paulino case.8 Today's papers all carried the news in bold headlines, along with Mejia's assertion that not only will he appear on the 19th but he will also go on television the previous night to give his version. Mejia has been feeling the heat. At a political meeting over the weekend of April 9-10, he waved a document at reporters and read out a list of names of individuals he said had been indicted by the U.S. court in the Paulino case. No one named had held a position in Mejia's administration. On April 13 Attorney General Francisco Dominguez Brito told journalists that the Dominican government has received no list, official or unofficial, from the USG. That was correct when he said it. Our pol/legal officer conferred with him informally later that the day, indicating we had no idea where Mejia had gotten the list. The Ambassador called the AG that evening. At a press dinner for the Ambassador shortly afterward, senior journalists were eager to know whether Mejia's information was correct. The Ambassador told them that the USG does not comment on ongoing investigations. In fact, Mejia's list was indeed accurate and complete) at least for the Quirino indictment. We speculate that he may have obtained it from the defense attorney of any of the several accused already under arrest in the United States. Under U.S. evidentiary disclosure rules, they will have received a copy of the Federal indictment with all names. One other encounter to note: District Attorney Hernandez Peguero called on the Ambassador a week ago, on April 6, for a rambling conversation in which he expressed the hope that the USG might share with him as soon as possible the information debriefed from Paulino in New York. The Ambassador heard him out, told him that the U.S. would provide the information officially and through channels at the appropriate time, and reminded him that certain Dominican law enforcement offices had been found to have leaked USG information directly to Quirino before the arrest. Hernandez didn't have much to say after that. The President names each District Attorney. Although the DAs are part of the structure of the Public Ministry (Department of Justice) headed by Attorney General Dominguez Brito, the AG does not have the unlimited authority, because he cannot remove them. Only the President can do that. Hernandez Peguero has the authority to look into the Quirino case, since the seizure of Paulino's 1380 kg of cocaine occurred in downtown Santo Domingo. Our contact in the Attorney General's office comment that their relations with the Santo Domingo DA still, still continue to be good (& todavia8) and we read the implication that the DA's grandstanding hasn't been helpful).

2. (U) Drafted by Michael Meigs.

3. (U) This piece and others in our series can be consulted on our classified SIPRNET site <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/> along with

extensive other material.
HERTELL